

# A Service Learning Interior Design Studio: Trauma-Informed Co-Design for Confined Populations

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## Motivation

After 2020, there has been increasing calls from interior design educators to design curricula that respond to current social challenges (Patel & Fontaine, 2023; Hadjiyanni, 2020). This endeavor remains to be challenging as many programs and students still operate under the assumption that interior design seeks to serve an elite minority, and faculty who challenge this perception face several hurdles (Patel & Fontaine, 2023).

## Overview

In a graduate interior design studio, I designed two projects addressing women's incarceration environments in the United States.

P1.

A semester long project involved designing a complex evidence-based trauma-informed halfway housing project for women.

P2.

An optional service-learning project of a single 1,000 sqft. room in a women's prison, built on the same contextual constraints and theories of the first project.

This approach of pairing a complex project that meets the course objectives with a smaller-scale service-learning project that provides a "real-world" dimension eliminated some of the challenges that face instructors when it comes to semester-long service-learning projects (Zollinger, Guerin, Hadjiyanni & Martin, 2009).

### Floor Plan Key

- K MAIN LIVING & KITCHEN (K)
- L LIBRARY (L)
- D DAYCARE CENTER (D)
- T THERAPY CENTER (T)
- G GYM (G)
- A ART ROOM (A)
- O STAFF ROOM & OFFICE (O)
- B SALON & BEAUTY STUDIO (B)
- S SINGLE SUITE (S)
- D DOUBLE SUITE (D)
- F FAMILY SUITE (F)



Students' Work: Rachel Leonard + Noelle Peay; Halfway housing project.

## Effectiveness

Although no systematic data has been collected to assess the effectiveness of the projects, the ability of students to visit the prison, run a workshop with "real-world" clients, and propose solutions for both projects based on the pre-design phase were some of the positive reflections that students had shared.

## Procedures

- The semester started with an informational visit from the Director of the Center for Correctional Solutions at a southwester university who went over basic understanding of the justice systems and the reformative approach of his center.
- Shortly after, a field trip to one of the women's prison in the state was organized through the center.
- Students prepared a workshop that included card sort activities, drawing exercises, and focus group discussions for the incarcerated women.
- Results from the workshop were used to inform both projects.
- Students who decided to participate in the optional project were given the opportunity to compete for a gift card supported by an internal grant.
- Two out of seven teams submitted the optional project proposals and the award was divided amongst them.

## Reflections

	Facilitating Factors	Hindering Factors
Service-learning	Students' new perspectives on persisting problems	Mismatch between the academic semester duration and project schedule
	Students training in engaging with real-world, rich, contextual design prompts	Data and information management in addition to existing students' commitments
	Students' willingness for creative risk-taking and potential for innovation within constraints	Commitment changes of partners from pre-design through implementation
	Providing a real-world limited-scale application of principles learnt in a more complex semester-long project	

## Broader Impact

One of the submissions was selected for implementation by the prison as a model for carceral community spaces in the state in July, 2024.



A picture of the room before the re-design process.



Students' Work: Carrie Dally and Wenjing Wang; Photo of implemented design in the prison.